

SYMPOSIUM ON ERASMUS.

COLLECTED FROM SEVERAL SOURCES.

MARCH 1, 1916, was the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the first edition of the New Testament in Greek prepared by Desiderius Erasmus, the "most versatile and most ingenious humanist" and citizen of the world. In the March issue of *The Open Court* we celebrated this anniversary by publishing as frontispiece a reproduction of Holbein's most famous portrait of Erasmus, and the same number contained also an article by Dr. Bernhard Pick on "The Four-Hundredth Anniversary of the Publication of the First Greek New Testament" and one by Mr. C. K. Ogden, of Cambridge, England, on "Desiderius Erasmus and his Significance for the Reformation." There are other phases of interest connected with this earliest of the moderns, a few of which we here group under one general heading.

THE "ENCOMIUM MORIAE" AND HOLBEIN.

Erasmus was born in Rotterdam in 1466 (some authorities state 1465) and came to Basel in 1513 in order to get into touch with the printer Froben. Next to Koberg of Nuremberg and Amerbach of Basel Froben was regarded as the most zealous and inspired disciple of Gutenberg's art. He was the publisher of the *Adagia* (Maxims) of Erasmus, as well as of his edition of the Greek New Testament. The learned scholar was well received by Froben, and during the following year used to come regularly to Basel from his home at Louvain. Later he took up his permanent residence in Basel.

In 1514 Froben published the *Encomium Moriae*, Erasmus's biting and jesting Latin satire with its punning title on the name of his friend, Sir Thomas More. The preface states that this book was written during Erasmus's journeys on horseback and was done to beguile the weariness of the way. A copy of the first

edition containing Holbein's famous pictorial commentary is now preserved in the Basel Gallery. The original drawings were little sketches done with pen on the broad margins of the book, opposite the paragraphs of the text to which they referred.

All that is known of the history of this volume is that it may have belonged at one time to Erasmus himself, or to the printer who used to employ young artists to make drawings, title-pages and other suitable embellishments for books: Among these young struggling artists of that time was Hans Holbein. It is supposed that a copy of the book was lying on the printer's table and fell



ERASMUS WRITING THE
"ADAGIA."



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES
Looking for the key of knowledge
and grinding out truth for
others to swallow.

into the hands of Holbein while he was waiting for orders from the printer. Finding the book very amusing, he sketched his comments in pictures as he read the text.

It is thought that the printer showed the drawings to Erasmus who was greatly pleased with the illustrations for in them the meaning of his text finds a fitting artistic echo. It is supposed that he gave the order to Holbein to finish the entire book, and that it finally fell into the hands of the theologian and schoolmaster, Oswald Molitor or Myconius, from whom it found its way into the gallery at Basel where it is now kept.

This history of the book is based on the facts that Molitor's ownership is proved by an inscription on the title-page, and that the earlier ownership of Erasmus is established by a second inscription on the second title-page. These inscriptions prove that the marginal illustrations were completed in ten days and that Erasmus derived much entertainment from them.

The book contains annotations in Molitor's handwriting, and from one of them it is learned that the illustrations were done in 1515. The questions as to the original ownership of the volume and who gave the permission to Holbein to make the illustrations is fully discussed in Hes, *Ambrosius Holbein*, pages 83-94. The



THE SYMBOL OF THE HOLY
GHOST.

It is the dove and not the eagle.



FOLLY IN CAP AND BELLS.

Addressing her praises to the fools
among men.

drawings have been subjected to a searching examination and comparison, and Dr. Hes points out that it is impossible to accept all of them as the work of Hans Holbein. He is inclined to think that the illustrations may have been begun by Holbein in an idle moment in a copy of the book found lying in the printer's office, and that other young artists may have added their sketches until several drawings had been made. The work may then have been shown to Erasmus by Froben and together they may have encouraged Holbein to finish the drawings, which are eighty-two in number. Those which we here reproduce are among those generally recognized to be by Holbein's own hand.

Holbein's originals were copied a number of times, both during his life and afterwards. Some of them verge on the flippant. One of them, representing "the brutish man," shows a young man drinking wine from a bottle and making love to a young woman; and while this drawing is harmless enough in itself, it was the direct occasion of undeserved slander.

It happened that on one of the drawings Holbein has inscribed Erasmus's name, and Erasmus objected because he did not want to be included among the foolish of mankind. To revenge himself on the artist for doing this, Erasmus wrote Holbein's name on the



THE SOVEREIGN.

Said to be King Maximilian.



ALMS-GIVING.

The over-religious man is always foolish in the distribution of charity.

drawing illustrating the young man drinking the wine and flirting with the girl. Poor Holbein never quite recovered from the consequence of this practical joke.

The spiritual affinity between the humanist of mature years and the youthful illustrator eventually developed into a permanent friendship. Erasmus took a personal interest in the lad, let him paint his portrait, and later recommended the restless painter to his friends Peter Aegidius in Antwerp and Thomas More in England. This was in 1526. Holbein's native country had no suitable commission for him, but through Erasmus he made his fortune in England. He portrayed his patron a number of times,

for Erasmus was fond of having pictures of himself made for his friends. In 1524 the latter sent two portraits to England and a third to France—all three by Holbein. Besides these Holbein made the drawing for a woodcut which shows Erasmus in full figure *im Gehäus*, that is, in a rich Renaissance frame. The small circular portrait which we reproduce as our frontispiece was probably painted in 1530, and belongs to the Amerbach collection. It has



THE DEVIL AND ST. BERNARD.
The Devil promises that by repeating daily seven verses from the Psalms Heaven may be won.



THE COURTIER PRACTISED
IN DISSEMBLING.

"To feign the fool when fit occasions rise,
Argues the being more completely wise."—*Horace*.

always been a favorite subject for copyists. Our reproduction is from E. A. Seemann's series, *Die Galerien Europas*.

LUTHER ON ERASMUS.

Erasmus was before all else a scholar, and was not a man of deep religious feeling. Though in the main well disposed toward the Reformation, he was skeptical and cautious. Ardor and impetuosity such as Luther and Hutten evinced were repugnant to him. He was a clear thinker, skilful satirist, and accomplished author, and yet, though standing very high intellectually, he was indecisive in matters of business. The theologians said that he laid the egg that Luther hatched. Theoretically he went farther than

Luther, but only theoretically, so that consequently his position was somewhat ambiguous. To him the Reformation was as unsatisfactory as the traditions of the orthodox church. He thought for a while that he could gain the friendship and alliance of the reformers, but they were vigorously opposed to anything that was not devout Christianity, and so his attempts at coming to an understanding with Luther naturally and necessarily failed. Erasmus's work is of immense value to New Testament scholars. A man like



THE BIRTH OF WISDOM.

"When Jove went big of Pallas in his brain, he was forced to use the midwifery of Vulcan's axe to ease him of his teeming burden."—*Erasmus*.



KING SOLOMON.

"Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom."—*Proverbs xv. 21.*

Melanchthon was capable of appreciating it, but otherwise Erasmus was regarded as an enemy to the movement and even an infidel. The situation will be best characterized by a few extracts from Luther's *Table Talk*, which we here reprint from Hazlitt's translation.

"Erasmus of Rotterdam is the vilest miscreant that ever disgraced the earth. He made several attempts to draw me into his snares, and I should have been in danger, but that God lent me

special aid. In 1525, he sent one of his doctors, with 200 Hungarian ducats, as a present to my wife; but I refused to accept them, and enjoined my wife to meddle not in these matters. He is a very Caiphas.

"Qui Satanam non odit, amet tua carmina Erasme,
Atque idem jungat furias et mulgeat oreum.

"Erasmus is very pitiful with his prefaces, though he tries to smooth them over; he appears to see no difference between Jesus Christ our Saviour, and the wise pagan legislator Solon. He sneers



THE FOOL AND THE WISE
MAN.

Fools speak the truth; while the wise man, as Euripides observes, carries a double tongue—the one to speak what may be said, the other what ought to be said.”—*Erasmus*.



THE ASTRONOMER.

“A judicial astrologer pretending to keep correspondence with the stars . . . a presumptuous imposture, yet some, to be sure, will be so great fools as to believe them.”—*Erasmus*.

at St. Paul and St. John; and ventures to say that the Epistle to the Romans, whatever it might have been at a former period, is not applicable to the present state of things. Shame upon thee, accursed wretch! 'Tis a mere Momus, making his mows and mocks at everything and everybody, at God and man, at Papist and Protestant, but all the while using such shuffling and double-meaning terms, that no one can lay hold of him to any effectual purpose. Whenever I pray, I pray for a curse upon Erasmus. . . .

"Erasmus was poisoned at Rome and at Venice with epicurean doctrines. He extols the Arians more highly than the Papists; he ventured to say that Christ is named God but once in St. John, where Thomas says: 'My Lord and my God.' His chief doctrine is, we must carry ourselves according to the time, or, as the proverb goes, hang the cloak according to the wind; he only looked to himself, to have good and easy days, and so died like an epicurean, without any one comfort of God.

"This do I leave behind me as my will and testament, where-



CREDULOUS PROSELYTE PRAY-
ING TO ST. CHRISTOPHER.

He invokes protection from danger and misfortunes while journeying.



THE TURK AND HIS GOD.

Like the Christian the Turk worships his own image.

unto I make you witnesses. I hold Erasmus of Rotterdam to be Christ's most bitter enemy. In his catechism, of all his writings that which I can least endure, he teaches nothing decided. Not one word says: Do this, or, do not this; he only therein throws error and despair into youthful consciences. He wrote a book against me, called *Hyperaspites*, wherein he proposed to defend his work on free-will, against which I wrote my *De servo Arbitrio*, which has never yet been confuted, nor will it ever be by Erasmus, for I am certain that what I wrote on the matter is the unchangeable truth

of God: If God live in heaven, Erasmus will one day know and feel what he has done.

"Erasmus is the enemy to true religion, the open adversary of Christ, the complete and faithful picture and image of Epicurus and of Lucian."

Luther appears in these comments in all his narrowness, but it would be a great mistake if we judged Luther from the modern standpoint of breadth. It was because of his very narrowness that Luther was great. If he had not been possessed of that narrow-minded courage he would probably not have taken the stand he did before the Diet of Worms, and would not have been a fit man for his work in history. There he stood and faced very probable death



FOLLY TALKING TO HER
PUPPET.



PENELOPE AT HER LOOM.

on the faggots—the fate which had befallen John Huss. Would he have done the same if he had been as broad-minded as Eras^mus? Scarcely. The man needed at the time was Luther with all his childlike faith, who called Copernicus a fool for trying to upset the whole *scientia astronomicæ*, and who himself was of a mentality that could see the Devil with horns and hoofs bodily before him.

QUERELA PACIS.¹

"If in courts of judicature the judge will not admit of suits which are frivolous and vexatious; if he will not admit of all sorts

¹ Extract from a rare English translation of Erasmus's "Complaint of Peace" in which Peace speaks, *propria persona*.

of evidence, especially that which arises from a personal pique and resentment, how happens it that in a business of far more consequence to human nature even than courts of judicature, in an affair the most odious and abominable, such as the promoting discord among human creatures and whole neighboring nations, causes the most frivolous and vexatious are freely admitted as competent and valid? Let the lovers of discord and the promoters of bloodshed between nations divided only by a name and a channel rather reflect



THE SOLDIERS OF CHRIST.

The one-armed cap-a-pie, the other with syllogism and arguments; both fighting for tithes and power over the people.



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Or the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God.

that this world, the whole of the planet called earth, is the common country of all who live and breathe upon it, if the title of one's country is allowed to be a sufficient reason for unity among fellow countrymen; and let them also remember that all men, however distinguished by political or accidental causes, are sprung from the same parents, if consanguinity and affinity are allowed to be available to concord and peace. If the church also is a subdivision of this one great universal family, a family of itself consisting of all

who belong to that church, and if the being of the same family necessarily connects all the members in a common interest and a common regard for each other, then the opposers must be ingenious in their malice if they can deny that all who are of the same church, the grand catholic church of all Christendom, must also have a common interest, a common regard for each other, and therefore be united in love.

"In private life you bear with some things in a brother-in-law



FORTUNE, THE EMPRESS OF
THE WORLD.

"To wise men she is always stingy and sparing of her gifts, but is profusely liberal and lavish to fools."—*Erasmus*.



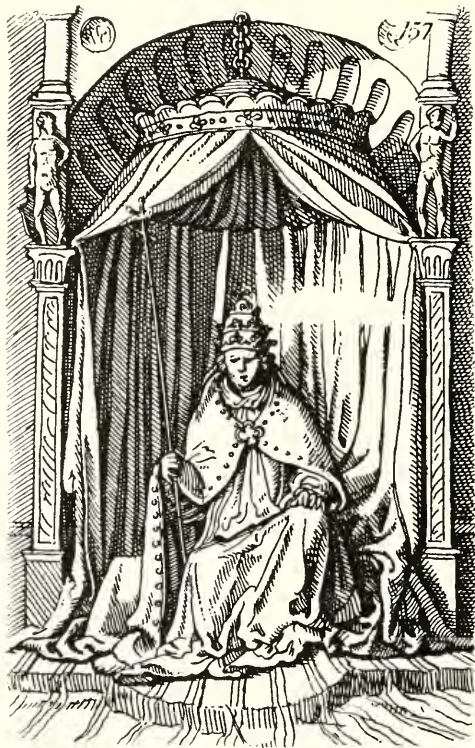
ATLAS SUPPORTING THE
WORLD.

"Supporting the Catholic church with the props and pillars of proposition and syllogisms no less effectually than Atlas carries the world on his shoulders."—*Erasmus*.

which you bear with only because he is a brother-in-law; and will you bear with nothing in him who by the tie of the same religion is also a brother? You pardon many little offenses on account of nearness of kindred, and will you pardon nothing on account of an affinity founded in religion? Yet there is no doubt but that the closest possible tie among all the Christian brotherhood is confraternity in Christ.

"Why are you always fixing your attention upon the sore place

where the insult of injury received from a fellow-creature festers and rankles? If you seek peace and ensue it, as you ought to do, you will rather say to yourself: "He hurt me in this instance, it is true; but in other instances he has aften served or gratified me, and in this one he was perhaps incited to momentary wrong by passion, mistake, or by another's impulse.' As in the poet Homer the persons who seek to effect a reconciliation between Agamemnon and Achilles



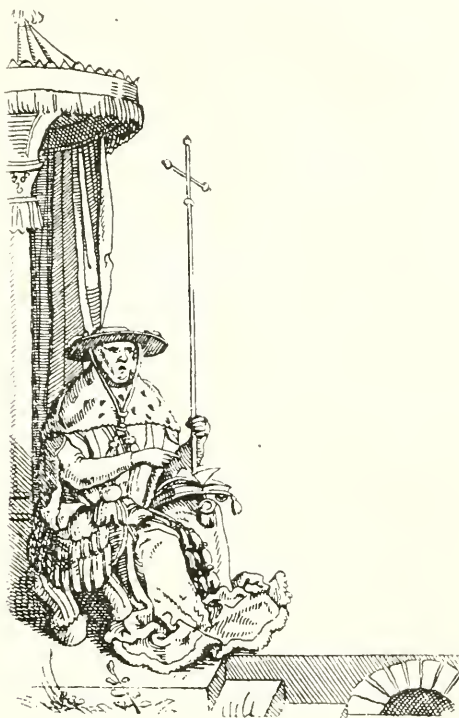
THE SPIRITUAL PRINCE OF ROME.

The Pope does not imitate the humble life of Christ, but "gets himself elected by bribery and holds his seat by pistol, poison, force and violence."—*Erasmus*.

throw all the blame of their quarrel on the Goddess Ate, so in real life offenses that cannot be excused consistently with strict veracity should good-naturedly be imputed to ill-fortune, or, if you please, to a man's evil genius; that the resentment may be transferred from men to those imaginary beings who can bear the load, however great, without the slightest inconvenience.

"Why should men show more sagacity in creating misery than

in securing and increasing the comforts of life? Why should they be more quick-sighted in finding evil than good? All men of sense weigh, consider, and use great circumspection before they enter upon any private business of momentous consequence. And yet they throw themselves headlong into war with their eyes shut, notwithstanding war is that kind of evil which when once admitted cannot be excluded again at will, but usually from a little one becomes a very great one, from a single one multiplies into a complication.



THE CARDINAL.

Some apostolic retainers surpass the magnificence of secular princes.

from an unbloody contest changes to carnage, and at last rises to a storm which does not overwhelm merely one or two, and those the chief instigators to the mischief, but all the unoffending people also, confounding the innocent with the guilty.

"If the poor people of the very lowest order are too thoughtless to consider these things, it can be no excuse for the king and the nobles, whose indispensable duty it is to consider them well; and it is the particular business of the clergy to enforce these pacific

opinions with every argument which ingenuity and learning can derive from reason and religion; to enforce them, I say, and inculcate them on the minds of both the great, vulgar, and the small; 'instantly, in season, and out of season'; whether they 'will bear, or whether they will forbear.' Something will at last stick, if it is incessantly applied; and therefore let the pulpits and conversation of the clergy teach the bland doctrines of peace and love everywhere and always.

"Mortal man! (for so I address thee, even on a throne) dost thou exult at hearing the rumor of an ensuing war? Check thy joy



MEDAL OF ERASMUS IN 1519, WITH HIS *MEMENTO MORI* DEVICE

Obverse.—Bust of Erasmus in profile to left. In the field: ER. ROT. ("Erasmus of Rotterdam"). Legend: IMAGO . AD . VIVA. EFFIGIE . EXPRESSA . THN . KPEITTO . TA . ΣΤΙΤΠΑΜΜΑΤΑ . ΔΕΙΞΕΙ ("His image modelled to the living features. His writings will represent it better"). Below the bust is the date 1519.

Reverse.—A man's head to left on a cubical boundary stone inscribed, TERMINVS. In the field: CONCEDO NVLLI ("I yield to none"). Legend: ΟΡΑ . ΤΕΛΟΣ . ΜΑΚΡΟΤ . ΒΙΟΤ . ΜΟΡΣ VLTIMA LINEA RERVM ("Keep in view the end of a long life. Death is the final goal of all").

a moment and examine accurately the nature and consequences of peace and the nature and consequences of war; what blessings follow in the train of peace and what curses march in the rear of war; and then form a true and solid judgment, whether it can ever be expedient to exchange peace for war. If it is a goodly and beautiful sight to behold a country flourishing in the highest prosperity—its cities well built; its lands well cultivated; the best of laws well executed; arts, sciences, and learning, those honorable employments of the human mind, encouraged; men's morals virtuous and honest—then may it please your Majesty to lay your

hand on your heart and let your conscience whisper to you, 'All this happiness I must disturb or destroy if I engage in this meditated war.' On the other hand, if you ever beheld the ruin of cities, villages burnt, churches battered down, fields laid desolate, and if the sight could wring a tear of pity from thine eye, then, Sire, remember that these are the blasted fruits of accursed war! If you think it a great inconvenience to be obliged to admit an inundation of hired soldiers into your realms, to feed and clothe them at the expense of your subjects, to be very submissive to them, meanly to court their favor in order to keep them in good humor, well affected and loyal; and, after all, to trust (which is unavoidable in these circumstances) your own person and your safety to the discretion of such a rabble; recollect, that such is the condition of a state of warfare, and that these evils, great as they are, become necessary when you have made yourself their slave in order to enslave or destroy an imaginary enemy.

"If you detest robbery and pillage remember these are among the duties of war, and that to learn how to commit them adroitly is a part of military discipline. Do you shudder at the idea of murder? You cannot require to be told that to commit it with dispatch and by wholesale constitutes the celebrated art of war. If murder were not learned by this art, how could a man who would shudder to kill one individual, even when provoked, go in cold blood and cut the throats of many for a little paltry pay, and under no better authority than a commission from a mortal as weak, wicked and wretched as himself, who does not perhaps know even his person and would not care if both his body and soul were annihilated? If there cannot be a greater misfortune to the commonwealth than a general neglect and disobedience of the laws, let it be considered as a certain truth that the voice of law, divine or human, is never heard amid the clangor of arms and the din of battle. If you deem debauchery, rapes, incest, and crimes of still greater turpitude than these, foul disgraces to human nature, depend upon it that war leads to all of them in their most aggravated atrocity. If impiety, or a total neglect of religion, is the source of all villainy, be assured that religion is always overwhelmed in the storms of war. If you think that the very worst possible condition of society is when the worst of men possess the greatest share of power, you may take it as an infallible observation that the wickedest, most unprincipled, and most unfeeling wretches bear the greatest sway in a state of war, and that such as would come to the gallows in time of peace are men of prime use and energy in the operations of a siege or a

battle. For who can lead the troops through secret ways more skilfully than an experienced robber who has spent an apprenticeship to the art among thieves? Who will pull down a house, or rob a church, more dexterously than one who has been trained to burglary and sacrilege? Who will plunge his bayonet into the enemy's heart, or rip up his bowels with more facility of execution than a practised assassin, or thorough-paced cut-throat by profession? Who is better qualified to set fire to a village, or a city, or a ship, than a notorious incendiary? Who will brave the hardships and perils of the sea better than a pirate long used to rob, sink, and destroy merchant vessels inoffensively traversing the great waters? In short, if you would form an adequate idea of the villany of war, only observe by whom it is carried into actual execution.

"If nothing can be a more desirable object to a pious king than the safety and welfare of those who are committed to his charge, then, consistently with this object, war must of necessity be held in the greatest conceivable abhorrence. If it is the happiness of a king to govern the happy he cannot but delight in peace. If a good king wishes for nothing so much as to have his people good like himself, he must detest war as the foul sink of sin as well as misery. If he has sense and liberality enough to consider his subjects' riches the best and truest opulence he can himself possess, then let him shun war by all possible means; because, though it should turn out ever so fortunate, it certainly diminishes everybody's property, and expends that which was earned by honest, honorable and useful employments, on certain savage butchers of the human race. Let him also consider again and again that every man is apt to flatter himself that his own cause is a good one; that every man is pleased with his own schemes and purposes; and that every measure appears to a man agitated with passion the most equitable, though it is the most unjust, the most imprudent and the most fallacious in the issue. But suppose the cause the justest in the world, the event the most prosperous, yet take into the account all the damages of war of every kind and degree, and weigh them in the balance with all the advantages of victory, and you will find the most brilliant success not worth the trouble. Seldom can a conquest be gained without the effusion of blood. Therefore, in the midst of the rejoicings, illuminations, acclamations, and all the tumult of joy excited by knaves among fools, it must occur to a king with a feeling heart that he has embued hands, hitherto unspotted, in the pollution of the human gore. Add to this circumstance, distressing to every humane heart, the injury done to the morals of the people and the

general good order and discipline of the state, and you will find this a loss which neither money, nor territory, nor glory, can compensate. You have exhausted your treasury, you have fleeced your people, you have loaded peaceable good subjects with unnecessary burdens, you have encouraged all the wicked unprincipled adventurers in acts of rapine and violence; and, after all, even when the war is put an end to, the bad consequences of the war still remain, not to be removed by the most splendid victory. The taste for science, arts, and letters, languishes a long while. Trade and commerce continue shackled and impeded. Though you should be able to block up the enemy, yet in doing it you in fact block up yourself and your own people; for neither you nor they dare enter the neighboring nation, which before the war was open to egress and regress; while peace, by opening a universal intercourse among mankind, renders in some measure all the neighboring dynasties one common country.

"Consider what mighty matters you have done by thus boldly rushing into war. Your own hereditary dominions can scarcely be called your own. The possession is rendered insecure, being constantly exposed to hostile invasion. In order to demolish a poor little town how much artillery, how much camp-equipage and all other military apparatus, do you find requisite? You must build a sort of temporary town in order to overthrow a real one; and for less money than the whole business of destruction costs you, you might build another town by the side of that you are going to level in the dust, where human beings might enjoy, if you would let them, the comfort of that life which God has been pleased to bestow in peace and plenty. In order to prevent the enemy from going out of the gates of his own town, you are obliged to sleep for months out of yours in a tent of the open air, and continue in a state of transportation and exile from your own home. You might build new walls for less than it costs to batter down the old ones with your cannon-balls and all the expensive contrivances formed for the hellish purposes of marring and demolishing the works of human industry.

In this cursory computation of your expense (for that I am chiefly considering, and the gain that accrues from victory) I do not reckon the vast sums that stick to the fingers of commissioners, contractors, generals, admirals and captains, which is certainly a great part of the whole. If you could bring all these articles into a fair and honest calculation, I will painfully suffer myself to be everywhere driven from you mortals as I am, unless it should appear that

you might have purchased peace, without a drop of blood, at a tenth part of the expenditure. But you think it would be mean and humiliating, inconsistent with your own and your nation's honor, to put up with the slightest injury. Now I can assure you that there is no stronger proof of a poor spirit, a narrow, cowardly and unkingly heart, than revenge; especially as a king does not risk his own person in taking it, but employs the money of the people and the courage of the poor. You think it inconsistent with your august majesty, and that it would be departing from your royal dignity, to recede one inch from your strict right in favor of a neighboring king, though related to you by consanguinity or marriage and perhaps one who has formerly rendered you beneficial services. Poor strutting mortal! How much more effectually do you let down your august majesty and royal dignity when you are obliged to sacrifice with oblations of gold to foreign and barbarous mercenaries, to the lowest dregs, the most profligate wretches on the face of the earth; when, with the most abject adulation, and in the meanest form of a petitioner, you send ambassadors or commissioners to the vilest and most mischievous nations around, to ask them to receive your subsidies; trusting your august majesty's life, and the property and political existence of your people, to the good faith of allies who appear to have no regard to the most sacred engagements and are no less inclined to violate justice than humanity."